At the time of the Action:

      Pending Claims: 1-18 and 20-22

      Withdrawn Claims: None

      Canceled Claims: 19

After this Response:

      Pending Claims: 1-18 and 20-22

      Amended Claims: 1-18 and 20-22

      Withdrawn: None

      Canceled Claims: None

      New Claims: None

1.   (Currently Amended) A method of communicating object data requested by an instant messaging application executed on an instant messaging platform, the method comprising:

generating, at a client computing device running the instant messaging application, a unique hash value of a fixed length based on the object data received from a remote user, the object data representing [[a]] the remote user in the instant messaging application and comprising metadata descriptive of the object data, wherein the metadata comprises:

a hash field storing the generated hash value;

a location field storing a location identifier indicative of indicating a location of the object data other than a location in a local cache of the client computing

device; and

a type field indicating an object type which has been previously selected by the remote user to uniquely represent the remote user during future sessions of the instant messaging application;

storing the object data at a location in the local cache of the client computing device, wherein the location of the object data in the local cache corresponds to the hash value; and

returning an object name of the object data to the instant messaging application, the object name comprising the hash value and the location field and enabling access of the object data in the local cache by the instant messaging application without a portion of the object data being altered at the client computing device.

2. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

receiving a request for the object data from the instant messaging application, the request including the object name; and

retrieving the object data from the local cache of the computing device, wherein the object data is located based on the hash value in the object data.

3. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

receiving a request for the object data from the instant messing application, the

request including the object name; and

~~in response to receiving the request,~~ retrieving the object data from the location using the location identifier.

4.   (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 1, further comprising:

receiving a request for the object data from the instant messing application, the request including the object name; [[and]]

determining whether the requested object data is in the local cache of the client computing device based on the hash value; [[and]]

~~if the requested object data is in the local cache,~~ retrieving the object data from the local cache if the requested object data is in the local cache of the client computing device, otherwise,;

retrieving the requested object data from the location identified by the location identifier.

5.   (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 4, wherein the retrieving the requested object data from the location identified by the location identifier comprises:

retrieving the requested object data from network storage.

6.   (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 4, wherein the

retrieving the requested object data from the location identified by the location identifier comprises:

retrieving the requested object data from a local file system within the local client computing device.

7. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 4, wherein the retrieving the requested object data from the location identified by the location identifier comprises:

retrieving the requested object data from a file system remote of the client computing device.

8. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 7, wherein the retrieving the requested object data from the file system remote of the client computing device comprises:

accessing the file system via a peer-to-peer connection.

9. (Currently Amended) [[A]] The method as recited in claim 7, wherein the retrieving the requested object data from the file system remote of the client computing device comprises:

accessing the file system via a connection through a switchboard server.

10. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable storage medium having stored

~~thereon~~ computer-executable instructions <u>stored thereon</u> that, when executed by one or more processors in a client computer, ~~configure~~ <u>cause</u> the client computer to perform a method comprising:

receiving, at the client computer, a name associated with a user on a remote computer from an instant messaging application executed on the client computer, the name comprising location data and a hash value uniquely associated with a data object <u>received by and</u> representing the user on the remote computer, the data object comprising metadata descriptive of the object data, wherein:

<u>generating, at the client computer,</u> the hash value ~~is generated~~ to compute a condensed representation of the data object associated with the user on the remote computer;

the hash value ~~identifies~~ <u>identifying</u> a location of the data object in a local cache of the client computer;

the location data in the name ~~indicates~~ <u>indicating</u> a location of the data object other than the location in the local cache identified by the hash value; and

the metadata comprises:

a hash field storing the hash value;

a location field storing a location identifier ~~indicative of~~ <u>indicating</u> the location data in the name; and

a type field indicating an object type which has been previously selected by the user to uniquely represent the user on the remote computer during future sessions of the instant messaging application; and

retrieving the data object associated with the name, the retrieving comprising:

determining whether the data object is in the local cache of the client

computer based on the hash value; ~~such that~~

~~in an event the object data is in the local cache,~~ retrieving the <u>data</u> object

[[data]] from the local cache; <u>and</u>

~~in an event the object data is not in the local cache,~~ retrieving the <u>data</u>

object [[data]] from the location identified by the location data <u>if the data object is</u>

<u>not in the local cache</u>.

11.   (Currently Amended) [[A]] <u>The</u> computer-readable medium as recited in

claim 10<u>,</u> wherein the retrieving the <u>data</u> object [[data]] from the local cache comprises:

retrieving the <u>data</u> object [[data]] from the local cache based on the hash value.

12.   (Currently Amended) [[A]] <u>The</u> computer-readable medium as recited in

claim 10<u>,</u> wherein the retrieving the data object from the location identified by the

location data comprises retrieving the data object from a file system remote of the client

computer.

13.   (Currently Amended) [[A]] <u>The</u> computer-readable medium as recited in

claim 10<u>,</u> wherein the retrieving the data object from the location identified by the

location data comprises retrieving the data object from a local file system of the client

computer.

14.   (Currently Amended) [[A]] The computer-readable medium as recited in claim 10, wherein the retrieving the data object from the location identified by the location data comprises retrieving the data object from a network storage.

15.   (Currently Amended) [[A]] The computer-readable medium as recited in claim 10 wherein the retrieving the data object from the location identified by the location data comprises accessing a remote computer via a peer-to-peer connection.

16.   (Currently Amended) A system, implemented at a client computer, for managing a data object representing a remote user on a remote client computer in an instant messaging conversation between the client computer and the remote client computer, the system comprising:

one or more processors; and

memory coupled to the one or more processors, the memory thereon having instructions stored thereon, wherein the one or more processors cause the instructions to implement:

the data object representing the remote user on the client computer, the data object being received by the client computer from the remote client computer, and comprising metadata descriptive of the data object, wherein the metadata comprises:

a hash field storing a hash value generated, by the client computer, to identify a location in a local cache of the client computer in which the

data object is to be stored;

a location field storing a location identifier ~~indicative of~~ indicating a

location in the remote client computer in which the data object has been

stored;

a name field storing an object name comprising the hash value and

the location identifier of the data object; and

a type field indicating an object type which has been previously

selected by the remote user on the remote client computer to uniquely

represent the remote user during future sessions of the instant messaging

conversation; and

a data object store operable to:

retrieve the data object from the remote client computer through

the location identified by the location identifier; and

store the retrieved data object in the local cache of the client

computer based on the hash value.

17.   (Currently Amended) [[A]] The system as recited in claim 16, wherein the

object name further comprises a creator identifier identifying a creator of the data object.

18.   (Currently Amended) [[A]] The system as recited in claim 16, further

comprising a transport protocol stack enabling the object store to retrieve the data object

from the remote client computer over a peer-to-peer connection between the client

computer and the remote client computer.

19.   (Canceled)

20.   (Currently Amended) [[A]] The system as recited in claim 16, wherein the metadata further comprises:

a friendly name field storing a friendly name of the data object; and

a second hash value based on the metadata comprising the hash value, the location identifier, the object name, the object type, the creator identifier, and the friendly name of the data object.

21.   (Currently Amended) [[A]] The system as recited in claim 16, wherein the location identifier comprises a uniform resource locator (URL).

22.   (Currently Amended) [[A]] The system as recited in claim 16, wherein the location identifier comprises a uniform resource identifier (URI).